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INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 001033

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: IV PROGRAM INVITEES AND PARTICIPANTS OUTED

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1. (U) Summary: During a press conference from Telesur headquarters May 25, Amcit Eva Golinger released names of prominent, mostly pro-opposition, journalists who had either been selected for or had participated in the International Visitors (IV) Program. She claimed the IV participants were USG employees directed to infiltrate Venezuelan media and influence public opinion. She also accused USAID and Freedom House of trying to foment destabilizing acts in conjunction with the closure of RCTV. End Summary.

Golinger Reveals Names of IV Participants

2. (U) Eva Golinger, lawyer and Amcit, held a press conference May 25 in Caracas to demonstrate alleged USG interference in Venezuelan media outlets. Telesur set up a special set for the broadcast, which was also carried on VTV. Golinger displayed documents she had received in response to a FOIA request on the International Visitor (IV) program, including a list of IV recipients, the programs they attended, and the amount of each recipient's grant. She said that she considered all grant recipients to be employees of the State Department. Golinger mentioned at least six journalists by name--many associated with pro-opposition media outlets--that had participated in the International Visitors program between 2000 and 2005. Golinger also offered to email the full list to those in attendance. Attendees included local pro-BRV news agencies, a few pro-opposition media (El Universal, Globovision and Union Radio), and a Reuters correspondent.

3. (U) Golinger described the IV program as a way in which the USG tried to infiltrate the Venezuelan media and influence public opinion on issues of U.S. interest. She also tried to draw parallels between the timing of some of the IV programs, particularly those held in 2002 and 2003, with the April 2002 coup and the national strike, in an effort to support BRV theories of U.S. participation in those events. Golinger said she was making the announcement in the name of transparency and to alert Venezuelans and the world to U.S. attempts to interfere in Venezuelan affairs. She thought the timing was important given the alleged international media campaign to impugn Venezuela's image in the wake of the BRV's decision to close RCTV. In response to several journalists' questions, Golinger said her intention was not to intimidate, persecute or encourage aggression towards any of the journalists mentioned. She said she would

give participants "the benefit of the doubt" that they may have agreed to participate in the IV program out of professional curiosity and were manipulated by the USG.

¶4. (U) Golinger also cautioned reporters to differentiate between people who may have only been selected for the program--which she said would not have been their fault--but rejected the offer, and those who participated. However, she did not clarify whether she had tried to determine who may not have participated in the program. Instead, Golinger put the burden of proof on the journalists, saying they themselves should confirm whether they participated and if they were influenced or pressured by the United States. In response to a question, Golinger claimed to be unsure whether pro-government journalists participated in the IV-program, but said it would be "worrisome" ("preocupante") if they did because they must have intended to collaborate with USG plans.

Accusations against Freedom House

¶5. (U) Golinger also accused USAID of using Freedom House to plan violent acts against the BRV in relation to the closure of RCTV. She claimed that Freedom House, using USAID money, had brought a group from Serbian NGO OTPOR to train government opponents in violent destabilization techniques. (Note: The Albert Einstein Institute did sponsor a European NGO visit to Venezuela to evaluate the possible effectiveness of civil resistance training, but decided such training was not appropriate. Neither USAID nor Freedom House financed the trip.)

Questions about Golinger's BRV Ties

¶6. (U) International journalists questioned Golinger extensively about her relationship to the BRV. While she

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admitted to having worked for the Venezuelan Embassy on a legal matter in 2003, she said she does not have an official government position, nor did she claim to have ever received money from the BRV for her investigations. She also denied traveling to the United States to promote BRV interests.

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